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The American Institute of Sacred Literature

In the *Biblical World* for August attention was called to the new course of reading for ministers. It will be remembered that this course was carried out by a group of ministers meeting once a week through three months in the city of Chicago, under a personal instructor. The INSTITUTE is especially fortunate in being able to secure the material of this course for the benefit of its members.

The course aims to cover some of the important tendencies in the religious thought of today. Each type of thought is illustrated by a characteristic book. The purpose of the reading will be, first to gain familiarity with the ideas of each author, his point of view and purpose; second, to criticise the book so as to show its positive and negative qualities from the standpoint of constructive theology; and, third, to gain a sympathetic appreciation of its permanent contribution, however small.

The particular books to be read are as follows:

As representing what may be termed "modified orthodoxy," Clarke, *The Use of the Scriptures in Theology*. Dr. Clarke is a theologian whose growth out of the traditional method in theology has been compelled by modern biblical criticism. He strives to show how the Bible may be used in formulating theology, by one who accepts the results of such criticism.

The use of the historical method in theology is presented through Mathews, *Messianic Hope in the New Testament*. Professor Mathews shows how the rigid use of the historical method can be employed to discriminate between the permanent elements of Christianity in the New Testament, and the temporary forms of expression in which the Christian belief was formulated.

The third topic, "Ritschlianism," is reviewed through Herrmann, *Faith and Morals; or, Communion with God*. Herrmann is the most consistent living exponent of that epoch-making type of theology constructed by Ritschl. He attempts to establish a theology on an objective authoritative basis, which at the same time leaves a man absolutely free to follow his own convictions in the fundamentals of his belief.

The next theme, "Theology Based on Spiritual Symbolism," is studied through Sabatier, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion*. The author shows first that religion is a necessary experience of man, and that this experience demands the formulation of certain convictions. The realities

with which theology deals cannot be accurately described, but can be suggested to the human spirit by appropriate symbols.

Abbott, *Theology of an Evolutionist*, is chosen to represent theology in terms of evolutionary science. Dr. Abbott, frankly accepting the modern doctrine of evolution, attempts to show how the fundamental doctrines of Christianity may be effectively set forth in terms of evolutionary science.

Christian Hegelianism receives attention through John Caird, *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*. Dr. Caird attempts on the basis of Hegelian philosophy to show that the fundamental doctrines of Christian thinking are in complete accord with a rational view of the universe.

A group of religious movements, of which Christian Science is the most conspicuous example, is reviewed through Dresser, *Health and the Inner Life*. Each type is traced to its historical origin, and classified in relation to other types. The volume furnishes an admirable means of understanding this exceedingly vital phase of modern religious life.

The last theme to be considered is "Theology Based upon Modern Psychology." The book chosen is Jones, *Social Law in the Spiritual World*. Professor Jones attempts to do in the realm of psychology what Henry Drummond did so effectively in the realm of biology a few years ago. He shows that the psychological needs of men furnish a rational basis for religious belief.

The discussions of these books will be furnished to all members of the Professional Reading Guild (membership fee, \$1 a year) or to groups of ministers represented by a member of the Guild. A subscription to the *Biblical World* (new or renewal) sent through the office of the INSTITUTE will entitle to membership in the Guild without extra fee. The membership fee is an annual one, but the course may be continued indefinitely. Books may also be ordered through the INSTITUTE, and a limited number will be loaned upon payment of postage both ways, and a deposit of the price of the book, 90 per cent. of which will be refunded upon its return.

Groups of ministers in small cities or towns, who are deprived of the benefits of lecture courses, and are remote from the centers of thought, can find great stimulus and pleasant companionship in the discussion of these books in weekly meetings. The usefulness of the course to the isolated pastor will not be disputed. It has already been successfully carried on in a large city.

The readers of the *Biblical World* who have churches under their charge will not forget that Bible Study Sunday occurs in September (9

or 16), and each will add a voice that day to the thousands who will set forth the power and potency of a systematic study of the Bible in building up the Christian character, and enlivening the Christian fervor of the church as a whole.

The INSTITUTE has provided, without charge, for all ministers registering at its headquarters their intention to observe the day, a series of pamphlets upon Bible study, a list of the latest and best books and articles about the Bible, and a suggested form of service.

In order that the pastor may lose no time in utilizing the results of the address in any given church, the INSTITUTE has prepared the following pledge of personal Bible study:

Are you studying the Bible? Have you fallen into the way of thinking that Bible study is for childhood and youth, and are you in consequence losing the stimulus that comes to the Christian life from systematic study of the Bible?

The church is responsible for the continuous religious education of each and all of its members. Bible study is an important element in religious education, especially in view of modern scholarship and investigation. Will you during the coming year undertake a simple but systematic course of Bible study, to be prescribed by the pastor? If so, sign your name below.

Any number of copies of this pledge, desired for distribution on Bible Study Sunday, will be furnished free of charge, upon application to the office of the INSTITUTE.

A new edition of the OUTLINE STUDY COURSE UPON THE LIFE OF THE CHRIST is just issued. This edition contains, in addition to the material of the former editions, an excellent map, and a dictionary of terms.

The courses to receive special emphasis in the outline series this year are the "Life of the Christ" and the "Foreshadowings of the Christ."

The course just mentioned has a peculiar interest at this time, as one of those personally prepared by President Harper, and one of the first and most successful attempts to demonstrate the possibility of putting into the simplest and most interesting form the modern historical method of Old Testament study.

The emphasis upon these two courses does not preclude the use of any of the other outline courses, of which there are four.

Those who are contemplating the organization of clubs should communicate at once with the INSTITUTE office, and secure material through which to create an interest in church or community, as well as suggestions for organizing the results of that interest.